

CHINESE CHRISTIANS HELD HOSTAGE ALSO

April 10, 2001 (Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, wayoflife.org, fbns@wayoflife.org) - The following is from Voice of the Martyrs, April 09, 2001 (www.persecution.com):

The continued detention of 24 American aviators by the Chinese government should come of no surprise to Washington, according to a spokesman for The Voice of the Martyrs.

"The Chinese government is demonstrating its true color and unfortunately that color is Red," says Gary Lane.

The detained U.S. aviators are not alone.

"Thousands of Chinese Christians are held hostage by Beijing everyday, simply because they refuse to deny their faith and submit to the Communists' brand of Christianity," says Lane.

Case in point: Pastor Li Dexian, a house church leader in Guangzhou, has repeatedly been arrested for sharing his religious faith without government permission. Li said he has been arrested so many times during the past two years that he has lost count. He said during one recent detention, jailers tied his arms and legs together and chained him to a bedpost for three days.

Li has seen imprisoned Christians tortured so badly that their buttocks bled through their clothing. "They suffered this inhumane treatment simply because they failed to meet their daily production quotas in the Chinese labor camp," said Li.

Li expects he and some of his church members will be arrested again because the Chinese government has created a secret list of house church attendees. He has learned from sympathetic government sources that Public Security Bureau (PSB) agents plan to arrest those with previous arrest records if they continue to attend house church services.

Li recently told a VOM representative that arrests "will come at any time, but we are not afraid as we have prepared ourselves and we have not done any crimes."

He said the PSB interferes regularly with house church meetings. He describes one recent incident when PSB officials stormed into a house church meeting, confiscated hymnals and Bibles, and prevented the service from continuing.

"They confiscated and destroyed Bibles that we had legally purchased from the government," said Li.

Last year, PSB officials also confiscated Li's church and welded the doors shut, and in early November in the city of Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, they reportedly blew up and demolished at least 450 churches, temples and shrines. Government officials said religious leaders had built the churches and temples illegally.

The harsh treatment of Li is not stopping his ministry. In an official Communist Party document smuggled out of China to The Voice of the Martyrs, officials expressed their frustration at their inability to control Li's activities. "He has been arrested and educated many times," the report said, "and yet his heart has not died and his nature has not changed."

Why do Chinese house church leaders refuse to register their churches with the government or join the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM)? Pastor Samuel Lamb is a senior house church leader in Guangzhou. He was imprisoned for 20 years simply because he had shared his Christian faith with others in China.

Lamb said his church chooses to serve God instead of the Chinese Communists.

"Three Self, we don't join with them because they are official churches," Lamb explained. "In China, the authority sustains the TSPM to persecute the house churches. I will not register. If I register, they will control us, and I couldn't preach Daniel and Revelation."

Both pastors Lamb and Li ask Americans to pray for Chinese Christians and their house churches.

"And pray that the 24 American aviators now in Chinese detention will be treated humanely by Beijing," said VOM spokesman Lane. "We pray they will not be persecuted like the Chinese Christians."